

Atomic Habits, Mental Health, and Poverty Reduction: Adaptive Ritual Practices in Bali

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Abstract: The practice of Balinese Hinduism is increasingly challenged by the economic costs of ritual obligations, contributing to *ritual-induced poverty* and associated mental health burdens. Although previous studies have documented these problems, little attention has been paid to practical solutions. This qualitative study examines alternative forms of *yadnya* rituals in Bali that reduce both economic and psychological burdens. Data were collected through interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving ritual practitioners, crematorium managers, *griya* priests, and religious leaders in Bangli, Denpasar, Gianyar, and Karangasem. The analysis identifies four adaptive practices: alternative ritual venues, crematorium-based ceremonies, digital technologies, and collective rituals. These innovations reduced ritual costs by approximately 90-97% while alleviating psychological distress associated with social expectations and financial pressure. This study contributes by demonstrating that theological reinterpretation by religious leaders enables communities to preserve ritual values while adapting to contemporary economic and mental health challenges.

Keywords: *yadnya*; Balinese Hinduism; mental health; poverty reduction; atomic habits

1. Introduction

Hinduism, particularly in Bali, is a religion and social organizing principle, practiced by 86.8% of the population (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, 2025; Kusnandar, 2022; Picard, 2017). According to the latest provincial statistics, approximately 3.9 million Hindus live across Bali's eight regencies and one municipality (Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, 2025). This creates an unparalleled area of practice outside the Indian subcontinent, positioning Hinduism as the definitive blanket of Balinese perception of being, interpreting

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and including local customs with theological teachings to form a cultural practice (Ardhana 2022; Putra et al. 2025). This singular cultural practice is the belief in and practice of the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy, the relational harmony between (a) God (*Parhyangan*), (b) humans (*Pawongan*), and (c) the natural world (*Palemahan*), as a local and original principle to promote ecological control, community governance, and social sustainability (Lestari et al., 2025; Marhaeni, 2023). Adherence to this philosophy is expressed through *yadnya*, the ceremonial offering of the five *Panca Yadnya*, illustrating the community's commitment to religious practice (Suara et al., 2018).

More recent studies pinpoint challenges. The implementation of *yadnya* rituals shows what researchers call 'Causal Euphoria Ritual Yajña' (Oka Widana, 2025): the decline of religious literacy, the modernisation of religion, and the commodification of the sacred shift focus from religious and spiritual obligation to social obligation. The socio-economic changes and crises, such as climate change and the spiritual disruption of the pandemic, raise the question: How can Balinese Hinduism adapt socio-economically while retaining the integrity of its theology? (Wirawan et al., 2022). Bali serves as an exemplary community to demonstrate the balance religious communities seek between preserving sacred practices and adapting to modernity, globalization, and socio-economically driven change (Suardana et al., 2022).

Yadnya comes from the Sanskrit root *yaj*, meaning 'to worship' or 'to offer.' It is the first of the ritual frameworks that Balinese Hindus have constructed to express worship and keep the cosmos in balance (Hooykaas, 2013). *Yadnya* is categorized into five types called *Panca Yadnya*: *Dewa Yadnya* (offerings to gods), *Bhuta Yadnya* (offerings to elemental forces), *Rsi Yadnya* (offerings to spiritual teachers), *Pitra Yadnya* (offerings to ancestors including cremation), and *Manusa Yadnya* (offerings marking life-cycle events from conception to marriage). These five obligations contain an integrated system of theology addressing the five universal debts (*Panca Rna*) owed to gods, ancestors, sages, fellow human beings, and nature (Suastika, 2021; Wartayasa, 2018). The performance of every ritual requires high precision: appropriate timing according to the Balinese *wariga* calendrical system, a purified sacred space, *banten* (offerings) representing cosmic elements, prescribed liturgical texts, and the direction of a qualified priest (*sulinggi/pinandita*) as mediator (Maulana et al., 2022). *Yadnya* is far more than a religious obligation, it is the primary means through which Balinese Hindus spiritually settle their debts, sustain the cosmos, and socially weave relationships into a harmonious order.

In the past, the *yadnya* ceremony showed sincere devotion (*bhakti*) for the attainment of spiritual peace, but today, the ritual is shifting from purely theological obligation to a marker of social standing, community identity,

and paradoxically, a source of socio-economic and mental stress (Surpa & Wismayanti, 2022). Families, from a social expectation perspective, are pushed to meet growing community demands of ritual performances, resulting in what Reztriandi et al. (2025) calls ‘ritual consumption’ of little theological significance.

There are large economic costs associated with these practices. Balinese exposed to economic strain from wedding costs are described as being economically marginalized (Singgalen, 2020), with effects extending to household expenditure on food, health care, and children’s education. Development economists call this ‘ritual-induced-poverty-traps’ (Aldashev, 2024). Families cycle between holding rituals and being in debt without any chance of accumulating capital. This increases psychological suffering, leading to anxiety, depression, and social isolation, a phenomenon documented in developing countries where ritualistic pressure has become a pressure cooker of morbidity (Lund, 2012; Ivashchenko & Ivanov, 2019).

Although these difficulties have been described by various authors, little research has been carried out on community-based, self-organized problem-solving projects. Specifically, there has been no systematic application of behavioural-cultural frameworks, such as Atomic Habits theory, to explore how grassroots ritual adaptations originate and disperse, and there has been no examination within existing studies of how social theology can legitimate such changes as theologically appropriate.

Given this gap, this study is driven by a question: What other types of *yadnya* have arisen as adaptive solutions to alleviate mental stress and poverty in Bali? Secondary questions ask: (1) What are the economic costs and psychological comfort of other venues? (2) How do crematorium services manage time restrictions? (3) What digital technologies have been employed in crisis adaptations? (4) What are the financial and social benefits of collective implementation? (5) How does the notion of atomic habits relate to rational decision-making? (6) What theological credibility do religious leaders confer on alternative practices? and (7) What is the socio-economic impact on Balinese households that are middle to lower income?

This study’s significance is multifaceted. In theory, it creates a framework in social theology to theorize the religious response to psychological and economic stressors. In practice, it documents evidence-based elements in the Balinese community that attend to tensions between religious fulfilment and economic needs, applicable to other communities facing similar issues. To explore these emerging practices, the study utilizes two theoretical frameworks: Atomic Habits theory by James Clear (2018) and social theology. Atomic Habits theory explains how small behavioral changes (through identity shift, ease, accessibility, and compounding) can lead to significant long-term outcomes.

Social theology examines how religious traditions adapt while retaining their core identity. Together these frameworks enable analyses of how contemporary kinds of *yadnya* can shoulder the mental and socio-economic burdens by dealing with the uncertainty of mental obligations and economic burdens of theologically oriented *yadnya*.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Socio-Economic and Psychological Burdens of *Yadnya* Practice

Yadnya, from the Sanskrit root *yaj*, meaning ‘to worship’ or ‘to offer,’ is a ceremony of Balinese Hinduism and a social organizing principle. *Yadnya* embodies the obligation of every person in a culture. It is the fulfillment of a sacrifice that keeps the universe in balance (Hooykaas, 2013). Although a Balinese practice, *yadnya* is divided into five categories *Panca Yadnya*, which overlap and control the ritual functions of the entire life cycle and beyond. These include *Dewa Yadnya* (offerings to deities and manifestations of the divine), *Bhuta Yadnya* (offerings to the elementals for the balance of nature), *Rsi Yadnya* (offerings to the spiritual teachers or guides), *Pitra Yadnya* (offerings to the deceased ancestors, or cremation ceremonies), and *Manusa Yadnya* (offerings marking life-cycle events of humans from conception to marriage) (Sujarwo et al., 2019; Suastika, 2021).

The ritual of *yadnya* requires five elements, namely the divine timing based on the Balinese Wariga Calendar, a sacred space that has been purified, *banten* offerings that represent the cosmic elements, liturgical texts that are prescribed, and the leadership of a qualified priest (*sulinggih/pinandita*) (Maulana et al., 2022). *Yadnya* also serves to sustain cosmic order and community engagement (*ngayah*) through social cohesion (Suara et al., 2018). The *yadnya* has its contextual significance and social value in the broader doctrine of *Tri Hita Karana* of *Parhyangan* (God), *Pawongan* (people) and *Palemahan* (nature) (Lestari et al., 2025; Marhaeni, 2023).

This collection of literature, however, is mostly theological and functional in its description of *yadnya* and gives little attention to the way economic forces pervert these practices. Oka Widana (2025), using the concept of ‘Causal Euphoria Ritual *Yajña* (CERiYa)’ phenomena, describes the deterioration of religious literacy, modernization of religion, and sacralization of the market, which shift the focus of rituals from spiritual to social performance. According to Singgalen (2020), Balinese weddings contribute to the economic marginalization of families, which in turn affects household spending on food, health care, and children’s education. Development economists refer to this as ‘ritual-induced-poverty-traps’ (Aldashev, 2024), where households are caught in a loop of ritual performance and debt with no opportunity of positive net value. Reztrianti et

al. (2025) describe ‘ritual consumption’ as a type of expenditure that has no economic or theological significance but is driven by social expectations.

Economic stress in Bali is triggered by the *magebagan* tradition (mourning gatherings that require hosts to supply food for dozens of guests over numerous days), hospital storage fees for the remains of the deceased, and opportunity costs of ritual delays (Meidayanti Mustika et al., 2021). These are significant descriptions, but previous research do not explain how societies build solutions to these demands. They do a good job documenting the problem, but they do not offer a framework for understanding how grassroots problem-solving gets produced. Also the psychological features of ritual pressure are mentioned (Lund, 2012; Megatsari et al., 2020), but not hypothesized in terms of behavioral change / community adaptation: anxiety, depression, social isolation. The present study aims to fill this gap by exploring the pressures and the coping strategies devised by Balinese families as a response.

2.2 Existing Research on Ritual Adaptation and Its Limitations

There is now a body of research detailing adaptive strategies in Balinese Hinduism. However, this literature is scattered and primarily descriptive. Suardana (2018) describes the changes in the economic venue, the scheduling of the rituals and the role changes in ritual participation. Wahyuni and Lumanauw (2024) study the tactics families apply in non-traditional wedding locations such as Taman Prakerti Bhuwana, stating that the venue choice helps relieve the obligations before and after the ceremony, making the attendees feel less worried and more content than home ceremonies.

Crematoriums for *Pitra Yadnya*, as described by Huang and Rockwell (2023), address several problems simultaneously: ceremonial time pressure, financial burden from hospitality duties, and hospital storage challenges during death surges. Börner (2024) speaks about digital tools like Zoom and Whatsapp, which enabled participation in rituals when it was not possible to meet in person during the pandemic. Online invites and recorded rituals have remained as adopted habits post-pandemic. Surpi et al. (2025) describe collective *yadnya* implementations, in which community associations perform mass ceremonies (*metatah*, *ngaben*, rituals for pregnancy and infant death) at much lower cost than individual ceremonies, improving socio-psychological support for participants undergoing emotional distress.

This material is useful as documentation, but is limited in three ways. First, it is atheoretical, it defines what adaptations are, but does not offer an explanatory process for how or why these adaptations develop, disperse / become accepted. Secondly, it treats each of the adaptations (change of venue, usage of crematoria, digital technologies, collective ceremonies) as separate

phenomena, rather than as interconnected responses to a shared set of demands. Third, no research has looked at the theological legitimacy of these changes to date.

No study has addressed whether religious leaders view such adjustments as theologically valid. Nor has any research considered how Hindu teaching might actively advocate rather than simply tolerate ritual simplification. The present study tackles these constraints by utilizing behavioral and theological frameworks to conceptualize adaptation as a process and by investigating the religious rationale that supports transformation.

2.3 The Theoretical Gap

The above review shows a theoretical gap. The socio-economic and psychological costs of *yadnya* are well documented, and adaptive practices have been observed and reported, but no study has combined behavioral theory with theological analysis to explain how ritual transformation occurs and obtains legitimacy. However, no research has applied behavioral change models (those that explain how minor changes in individual practice aggregate into significant social change) to the context of Balinese Hindu ritual.

No study has considered what social theology could provide in terms of a religious reason that allows communities to engage in economically rational actions without feeling they are forsaking their faith. This gap matters, because without theoretical integration documented changes can be rejected as transient crisis responses or aberrations from practice. To fill this gap, the present study applies two complementary frameworks: Clear's (2018) Atomic Habits theory to evaluate how minor behavioral changes occur, are performed more easily, and compound into community-wide adjustments in *yadnya* practice; and social theology to understand how these changes are legitimated as theologically suitable by religious leaders.

3. Method and Theoretical Framework

3.1 Research Design and Approach

The method used in this study is qualitative with a social theology approach. The object of research is the practice of *yadnya* in Balinese Hindu society, especially the mental and economic difficulties of the practitioners. A qualitative method was chosen because it provides for a knowledge of social phenomena in their natural setting, particularly the interplay of religious responsibility, economic constraint and psychological well-being (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This question is well suited to the social theology approach because it allows for the investigation of how religious traditions reorient themselves under social influences, but do so while maintaining theological

integrity. Such an approach speaks directly to the research topics by focusing on participants' experiences, decision-making and the religious rationale they and their leaders give for adapting rituals. The researchers used purposive sampling to identify the participants of the study as those with first-hand, practical experience in alternative *yadnya*.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

There are three participant categories that capture a diversity of perspectives on the phenomenon. The first group engaged with alternative *yadnya* methods, such as I Gusti Ngurah Andika Manik Pradnyaningrat, I Made Yogi Pratama Putra, I Gede Tilem, and others, who could describe in detail the psychological and economic effects, both positive and negative, of implementing *yadnya*, as well as motivate others to enact the changing process and share their personal experiences.

The second group consisted of managers of *yadnya*, such as I Nyoman Karsana, Manager of Bebalang Crematorium in Bangli. Jro Mangku Alit, Manager of Santayana Crematorium in Denpasar, and Jro Mangku Dodi, Chair of Pinandita Sanggraha Nusantara Bali, who provided information related to the alternative *yadnya* facilities and programs, their operational and financial management, and the preparation of collective rituals and management of cremations.

The third group comprised religious leaders and priests, including Ida Bhagawan Agra Segening, who focused on the theologically and spiritually legitimate and authentic aspects of the practices of alternative *yadnya*. Their contribution was needed in determining how alternative practices of *yadnya* remained true to the meaning of the ritual, kept the spirit of *yadnya*, and aligned with the Hindu religious texts and traditions. Data were gathered from several sites, including crematoria in Bangli and Denpasar, *gria* (priests' compounds) in Gianyar, and community groups in Karangasem. This deliberate selection across roles and locales meant that the study recorded the phenomenon from the viewpoints of individuals who practice, manage and legitimate alternative *yadnya*.

3.3 Data Collection

The data gathering was carried out in five stages. In Stage 1 (preparation), the researchers formulated the research questions based on their initial impressions of social pathologies in Balinese culture and the lack of attention to mental health and economic issues after the pandemic. After setting the research objectives, the researchers designed some tools including interview protocols for each type of informant. The researchers reviewed literature to construct the theoretical

framework and to identify research gaps. Stage 2 (fieldwork). The fieldwork was done in several parts of Bali, such as the crematoria of Bangli and Denpasar, the *gria* of Gianyar, and community groups in Karangasem and other places.

Four methods of data collecting were used in the study. First, all participants participated in individual interviews taking place between 60 and 120 minutes. The interviews focused on individual stories and experiences on the alternative *yadnya*, the decision-making process, financial aspects, psychological impacts and theological viewpoints. All interviews were conducted in the Balinese and Indonesian languages to allow participants to feel comfortable and express themselves organically. Second, researchers did participant observation by attending and observing several alternative *yadnya* ceremonies such as collective *ngaben*, *mass sapuleger*, and wedding ceremonies at alternative settings. This allowed the researchers to observe and feel the social activities, social structures and emotional climate of the setting directly. Third, researchers documented alternative *yadnya* practices, facilities, ceremonial preparations, digital media use, and community engagement using photography and video. Fourth, the researchers did literature studies on the relevant Hindu texts, regional rules, and earlier studies on *yadnya* and its socio-economic links. Stage 3 (data organization).

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in Balinese and Indonesian. Transcripts were then sorted by informant category and ceremony type for further study. During Stage 4 (data verification), the researchers were involved in member checking by returning to selected participants to confirm the accuracy of preliminary interpretations. Stage 5 (data storage). All data were saved on password-protected devices accessible only to the research team.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis process was guided by the notion of Atomic Habits (Clear, 2018) and social theology. It looked at incremental changes in individual behavior towards *yadnya* practices and how these practices could lead to large-scale social changes influencing mental health and poverty reduction. The analysis was conducted in several rounds to capture the numerous ways the different types of data could be interpreted. Thematic analysis: The researchers conducted a thematic analysis in order to characterize repeating patterns and topics using interview transcripts, observation notes and documents. The process involved multiple steps.

First, all interviews were transcribed word by word in the original language, and then translated into English. Second, the researchers read over each transcript several times to become comfortable with the data. Third, relevant portions were given beginning codes (cost savings, social anxiety,

priest justification). Fourth, codes were compared and combined into probable themes. Fifth, themes were checked against the complete data set for internal coherence. Sixth, themes were identified and recognized, which led to four alternative *yadnya* practices provided in the results: venue options, crematorium utilization, digital technology adaption, and collective *yadnya* implementation.

Interpretive analysis: The researchers used social theology for interpretive analysis, and they set their findings in the context of Balinese Hinduism and social reality. This method helped to understand the ways informants addressed the tension between religious social obligation (theology) and economic social reality and the ways alternative methods were employed to preserve the integrity of religious activities while addressing social challenges successfully.

Comparative Analysis: An alternate *yadnya* practice was comparatively analyzed for its return. This covered the comparison of alternative and conventional approaches with relation to psycho-social elements, prices and time. Particular comparisons include the financial cost analysis of individual ceremonies versus communal rituals, time efficiency of crematorium versus traditional *ngaben*, and psychological and emotional results of venue ceremonies versus home ceremonies. These comparisons offered empirical support for the advantages of alternate techniques.

Theoretical Integration: The phenomenon of rational change of individual behavior, identity of the practitioner, norms of practice, ease and accessibility of practice, supportive environment, design of crematorium facilities, community habits and social norms all contributing to the community embrace of alternative practices was understood through theoretical integration of Atomic Habits theory. The four selected behaviors were analyzed using the four principles of Atomic Habits: identity change, ease of behavior, environment design and compounding effects.

Triangulation and Validation: Data triangulation was utilized to ensure validity and minimize the potential for bias from a single source. Researchers triangulated findings from several sources including practitioner interviews, manager interviews, religious leader interviews, participant observation, and photographic recording.

Reflexivity and iterative analysis: The analysis was conducted in iterations where conclusions were exposed to new data for confirmation. Researcher reflexivity was maintained through acknowledgment of position and bias. The principal investigator, a Balinese Hindu familiar with *yadnya* ceremonies, recognized that this insider status facilitated access but risked assuming common understanding. To mitigate this, introspective memos were produced before and after each interview, and peer debriefing sessions were conducted with non-participating colleagues.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This study received written ethical clearance from the research ethics council of Universitas Hindu Negeri I Gusti Bagus Sugriwa Denpasar prior to data collection. All participants provided written informed consent after being informed of the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participants who preferred verbal consent for cultural reasons were asked to give verbal consent in the presence of a witness and this was documented.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: Participants were given the option of pseudonyms/ actual names in publications. Most participants, notably religious leaders and facility managers, chose to be identified by name since their roles were public. All persons who wished to remain anonymous have been given a pseudonym and all identifying details have been erased. All raw data are saved on password protected devices and only available to the study team.

Cultural Sensitivity: The study was carried out with great attention to the traditions of Balinese Hinduism and the protocols of rituals. Researchers dressed appropriately in terms of traditional costume during participant observation when entering hallowed locations. Permission to document the events was requested from community leaders and ritual hosts. No ritual artifacts / processes were disturbed in the sake of documenting. The researchers also made sure that they did not create an economic hardship for the host families.

Data Storage: Interview recordings, transcripts and images will be kept for five years post publication. All identifiable data will be securely erased after five years.

3.6 Theoretical Framework

This study brings together two theoretical frameworks, Atomic Habits theory (Clear, 2018) and social theology. Their combination is warranted because behavioral change in religious contexts involves both an explanation of how habits change at the individual level (Atomic Habits) and an account of how such changes attain communal religious legitimacy (social theology). Neither framework alone is enough, behavioral theory shows how change occurs, social theology explains how it is accepted.

Clear's (2018) Atomic Habits theory has a conceptual model for how small habitual changes in a person's daily routine can result in large-scale changes over long periods of time. Four of the theory's fundamental concepts, identity change, ease of behavior, ease of access, and compounding, provide a framework for analyzing stretching alternative practices in the context of *yadnya*.

The principle of identity change posits that in order for a change in behavior to be profound, there must be a change in the way the person perceives themselves. When a person's self-perception changes and they begin seeing themselves as a person that performs *yadnya* rituals in a sincere and economically rational way, and not just a person that performs the ritual to show a display of wealth, their behavior and ritualistic/cultural practices will align with their new self-perception. This identity change is supported by the Theological reframing from the religious authorities, who rationalize and provide the religious/spiritual validity of simplistically structured *yadnya* ceremonies.

The second principle states that behavior will become easier to change, adopt, and practice alternative *yadnya* rituals. Obstacles to the timely completion of the cremation ritual and burial ceremonies have been removed by the services offered by crematoriums. Digital invitations have taken care of the 'printing and distributing' obstacle to the completion of the ritual; and collective rituals, as opposed to individual ritual practices, simplified the preparation for the ritual. These changes, which made the 'least resistant' pathways to the completion of the ritual also the pathways that maintained the legitimacy / validity of the ritual, have encouraged the ongoing continuation and practice of the rituals.

The third principle, designing environments for success focuses on the provision of certain facilities and the structuring of a community organization. The construction of crematoriums, *gria* venues, and the scheduling of collective ceremonies make it easier for people to adopt alternatives. When participants are surrounded by others making the same choice, the community leaders making the choice, and the ceremonial calendar, the people adopt new habits in part because of the behavioral ecosystem.

The principle of compounding effects describes how a base shift in individual behavior aggregates to a more complex social shift. Each family that successfully performs alternative *yadnya* becomes a model for others, each community organization that institutionalizes collective ceremonies shifts the social norm, and each religious leader who provides a rationale for the practice expounds the acceptable scope further. Cumulatively, these changes affect how society perceives the practice of *yadnya*.

The framework that describes how religious traditions shift while retaining their core identity is known as social theology. In the Balinese context, the adaptation of a certain practice is done through the legitimization of alternative practices in a manner that preserves the fundamental aspects of the ritual while exercising non-essentials. Suara et al. (2018) show how priests and religious leaders attempt to adapt while still remaining in the bounds of their traditions.

In their theological arguments, emphasis is placed on the central pillars of *yadnya*, where in ritual setting, venue, and scale, materials are considered practical and are relegated to the background. Sincere offerings (*bhakti*), and priestly direction and proper timing, are placed at the forefront. This hierarchical formulation of the elements of ritual permits the flexibility of practice without compromising its theological integrity. Donder et al. (2025) attempt to trace this flexibility to the first principles of Hindu philosophy. They argue that the Vedic tradition views sacrifice as a means of maintaining the cosmos rather than as an end in itself, while the *Rta* (cosmic order) is maintained with the proper intention (cosmic order), not by excessive material means. This means of critique, while providing justification for a ritual that is not economically excessive, fully permits as sincere, practice that is economically proportionate.

The Hindu ethical principles of *desa, kala, patra* (literally place, time, and circumstance) further support flexible practice. This principle suggests that a religious duty is to be fulfilled with consideration to the surrounding context, and therefore provides a justification for flexible practice of the ceremony while maintaining the intended spiritual focus. In present-day Bali, the principles of *desa, kala, patra* provide justification for the flexibility in the practice of *yadnya* to suit the current economic situation while maintaining its meaning.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Result

Field findings from Bangli, Denpasar, Gianyar and Karangasem show a shift in how Balinese Hindu households manage religious duties under economic and psychological stresses. Practitioners scale, stage, and administer *yadnya* to avoid the risk of financial and mental pain while retaining theological legitimacy (*desa, kala, patra*). These adaptations show that religious responsibility can be reconfigured into financially sustainable actions. Empirical data collected from crematoriums, *gria* (priest compounds), and community organizations identified four operating paths of alternate *yadnya*. An illustration of this conceptual framework is given in Chart 1.

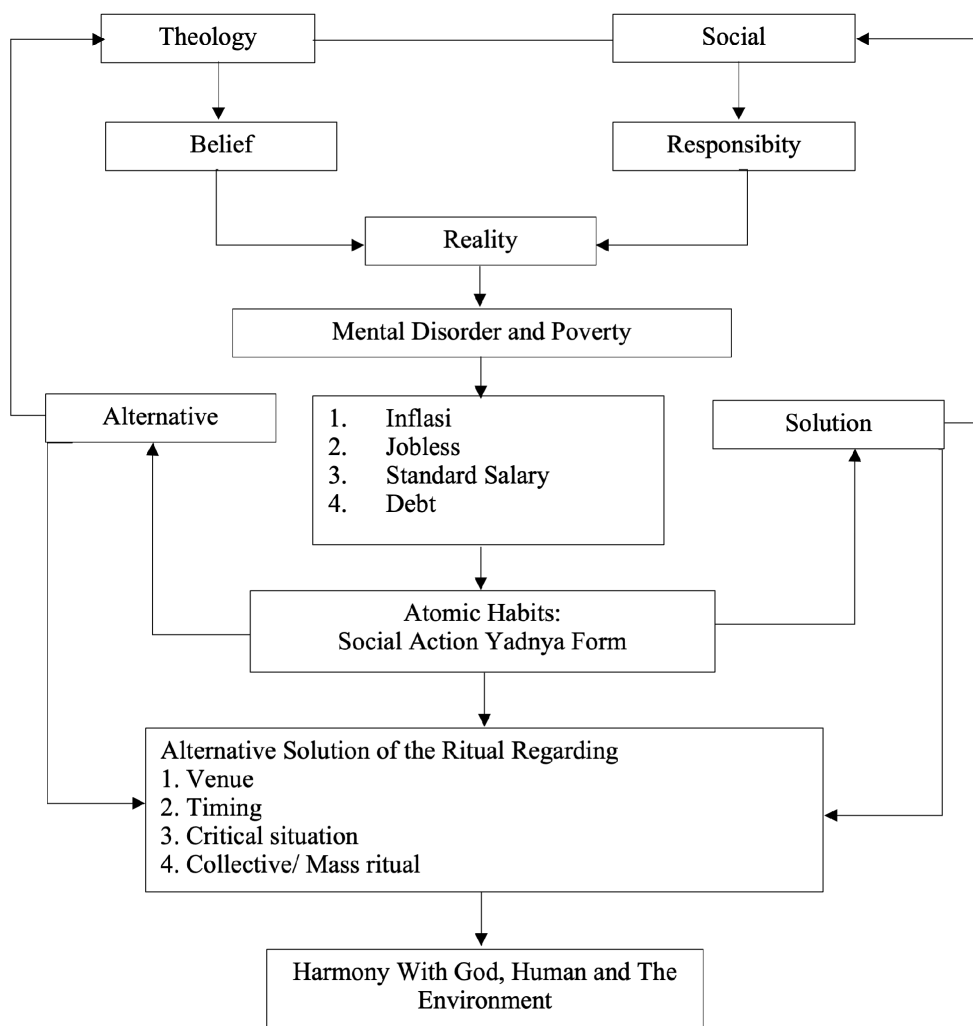


Chart 1. Alternative Forms of *Yadnya* in Reducing Mental Burden and Poverty in Bali (Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025)

Four forms of alternative *yadnya* practices were determined based on interviews, participant observations, and documents collected from multiple research sites in Bali, including crematoriums in Bangli and Denpasar, *gria* in Gianyar, and community organizations in Karangasem. The identified practices include, (1) venue alternatives, (2) use of crematoriums for timing alternatives, (3) digital technology for critical situations, and (4) community *yadnya* practices (collective/ mass ritual).

4.1.1 Alternative Venues for *Yadnya* Practices

One of the observations made is that given the rising number of Balinese people and families that are opting for alternative venues for the execution of

yadnya ceremonies, there is now an increased number of venues being used.

I Gusti Ngurah Andika Manik Pradnyaningrat chose to have his wedding at Taman Prakerti Bhuwana in Desa Beng, Gianyar, and explains his reasoning:

‘I chose to have my wedding at Taman Prakerti Bhuana because of how provides a good service with a good and clean area. I also do not want to burden my family to prepare a wedding at home because they also have their own activities. After the ceremony, I also do not have to clean the ceremony place, decorations, and so on. I feel more comfortable and at peace with my *yadnya*. I can directly greet the guests without thinking about the place. For me, the cost of renting the ceremony area is not expensive at all since it is also included the ceremony needs and is even more affordable than holding a wedding ceremony at home.’ (Interview, I Gusti Ngurah Andika Manik Pradnyaningrat, 15 June 2025).

Here, three interrelated aspects of venue choice are addressed: logistical alleviation due to family burden, psychological relief due to diminished post-ceremony burdens and economic gain through bundled pricing. The participant focusing on ‘comfort and peace’ rather than material display signals a change from ritual as social performance (Oka Widana, 2025) to ritual as personally meaningful spirituality. This is in line with Clear’s (2018) principle of ‘make it easy’ where removing friction (cleanup, logistics, family coordination) means the alternative behavior becomes far more likely to be repeated.

Yogi Pratama Putra, who performed a three-month ceremony for his second child at a *gria* in Gianyar, also provided supporting data:

‘I chose *Gria* in Gianyar for the three-month ceremony for my second child mainly for cost efficiency. If the ceremony had been held at home, I would have had to arrange the supplies for chairs, tables, a place for *yadnya*, and other decorations. I would also have had to ask neighbors to help decorate the house, so that would cost more. At the *Gria*, I don’t have to worry about decorations since they have everything set up beautifully and in accordance with Balinese *yadnya* traditions’ (Interview, I Made Yogi Pratama Putra, 14 August 2025).

The economic logic is laid bare here. Comparing the cost of an individual ceremony at a home (more than Rp50,000,000 if social obligations such as entertainment and catering are added), with *Gria* package (Rp10,000,000) means there is an over 80% price reduction, Yogi Pratama, for this follow up comment that ‘the essence of ritual is in offerings, ceremony leader, and comfort, not the grandeur of a site’ bears all the marks of a theological reframing rooted in the Hindu ideal *desa, kala, patra* (place, time, circumstance). It makes economics

purely rational but without any feeling of failure in spirit. Aside from the clearly defined economic benefits, Yogi Pratama also expressed the deep essence of the ritual's reorientation:

'For me, the essence of carrying out *yadnya* is not about the grandeur of the ceremony venue, but the most important aspects in the implementation of *yadnya* are the ceremonial facilities (offerings), the ceremony leader, and the feeling of comfort, calm, and peace in carrying out *yadnya*. When we carry out *yadnya* with happiness, then through the symbolic medium of the offerings, we are connected to God, *Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa*' (Interview, I Made Yogi Pratama Putra, 14 August 2025).

This statement reflects a theological hierarchy wherein theology of the heart (*bhakti*/devotion, comfort, happiness) supersedes a theology of display (venue/decorations). By prioritizing 'connection to God' through sincere offerings over material grandeur, the participant provides a lay theology that mirrors the priestly justifications discussed in Section 4.1.2. The latter identity shift, from being an expensive ritual performer to sincere devotee, is what Clear (2018) identifies as necessary for lasting behavioral change.

Across all participants, the psychological advantages of venue options were noted. Relieving social comparison concerns, particularly the worry that neighbors and community members critique the extent of home adornments, was a primary consideration for selecting venue options.

4.1.2 Crematorium Utilization for Timing Efficiency

To ease constraints regarding the *pitra yadnya* (ancestral ceremony), the second finding involved the innovative use of crematoriums for the ritual gaps created by customarily restricted cremations, and during large-scale religious ceremonies at the Pura Besakih temples.

I Nyoman Karsana, Chair of the Sagraha Mandra Kantha Santhi Crematorium Foundation and also Bendesa Adat of Bebalang Village, Bangli Regency, elaborated on the crematorium services even during the prohibitions:

'We still carried out the *Ngaben* ceremony, even though there was a village ban and official circular, because at that time, there were many bodies in the hospital. So, several families chose the crematorium to make it more effective and efficient. Besides, waiting for the big ceremony would have added more costs. Another alternative, some families chose to hold the *mekinsan* ceremony at the crematorium. The point is, the time for implementation can be shortened to reduce the economic burden, and the community can return to work without any burden' (Interview, I Nyoman Karsana, 10 May 2025).

This statement shows the multiple factors that crematorium use addresses. First, for prohibitions, there is the issue of bodies piling up in the hospitals, which means the family is incurring costs and suffering from the emotional burden of having to wait for the ritual. Second, when there is no *ngaben*, the family members have to entertain the guests, and provide hospitality to the community participating in *magebagan*, which is the custom of coming to the house of mourning, and staying there all night. Finally, for the rituals that take a long time, they are also leaving the family members from their jobs, which creates an additional cost for the family that is already having to spend a lot for the rituals.

Adding to the context of the *Panca Wali Krama* ceremonies at Pura Besakih, Jro Mangku Alit, Manager of Santayana Crematorium in Denpasar, stated the following:

‘Many Hindu people see the crematorium as a solution to the *ngaben* during the *Panca Wali Krama* at Pura Besakih. The *Adat* Village does not provide *Ngaben* at the *setra* (grave). As for the people, they want to do it quickly, because the costs incurred are very high at the hospital as well as for the dead bodies. If the dead body is at the house, then the *krama adat magebagan*, that means a lot of money is spent. Moreover, the deposit of dead bodies at the hospital is overflowing so that the dead body rooms are full. So the existence of the crematorium is a solution, and an alternative, that helps the community, it is easier, more practical, economical, and does not take a long time’ (Interview, Jro Mangku Alit, 15 June 2025).

This account elucidates the ills that crematoriums remedy, cultural encumbrances that render relatives immobile, hospital capacity crises, and the cumulative material cost of protracted grieving. The overburdening of hospital mortuaries is a logistical issue and a spiritual calamity, families are left unable to carry out their religious duty to return the *Panca Maha Bhuta* (five elements) back to where it belongs. In doing so, the crematorium operates as a structural solution to spiritual and economic problems; what it can be considered an institutional innovation that eliminates systemic friction. Pitana (2020) also mentioned that the *ngaben* ritual at the crematorium is a form of religious social innovation in response to modern society. Modernization in this context does not eliminate tradition but rather updates ritual practices to be more efficient and affordable while remaining aligned with Hindu values. This phenomenon shows that tradition is dynamic and can adapt to social changes through a process of transformation that remains rooted in religious teachings.

The sheer scale and potential economic impact of the time the community members are required to wait is significant. The *magebagan* tradition, in which community members gather to wait at the house of the deceased, is a tradition that has existed in many cultures and is a representation of the community's recognition for a death that has recently occurred. From around 7pm to 5am WITA, and for a period of 2 days to 7 days of community members, it is expected that the family of the deceased provides food and light refreshment to all of the guests.

Ida Bhagawan Agra Segening, a priest, gave a religious rationale for completing the rituals on time:

'The implementation of the *Ngaben* ceremony, in accordance with the scriptures, is carried out quickly so that the deceased does not become a *buta cuil* (a wandering, unsettled spirit). The existence of a crematorium is a solution and an alternative for time management, facilitating the implementation of *Ngaben* due to village bans or situations and conditions that do not allow for a traditional ceremony. So, the faster the *Panca Maha Bhuta* are returned through the *Ngaben* ceremony, the sooner the child's duty of devotion is fulfilled. After that, they can return to work as usual to meet the needs of their families' (Interview, Ida Bhagawan Agra Segening, 18 June 2025).

The theological justification given by the priest itself serves a legitimisation. He bases being timely with cremation on scripture (so as to avoid the deceased becoming a *buta cuil*) which allows him to turn those who might see this as economic expedience into faith-obligated activity. The phrase 'as the sooner a child's devotion is earned' connects ancestral (filial) *bhakti* with profitmaking, since, having performed their ritual duty, the clan now returns to productivity.

The religious dimension is pertinent. The priest insists that as per the scriptures, *ngaben* should be performed, and done so without delay, lest the deceased become *buta cuil* (a restless, unanchored spirit). From this perspective, the *ngaben* is a religiously sanctioned economic activity and, for the family, the crematorium is a structural solution to their spiritual and economic dilemmas. I Gede Tilem's father, a noted artist from Bali, was cremated at the Dharma Kusuma Foundation Crematorium in Punduk Dawa, Klungkung. This example shows that even a family of great social standing, still uses crematorium services.

'My father has left us due to illness. Therefore, the agreement with my siblings and mother, father will be cremated from *ngaben* to *ngelinggihang dewa hyang* at the crematorium at Punduk Dawa, Klungkung. Considering the time, energy and cost. Thankful, all family members have been supportive, even the artistic community performed at the *ngaben* ceremony, as a form of loyalty and last tribute to our father' (Interview, I Gede Tilem, 18 Januari 2026).

This example helps to look at crematorium services as a social practice spanning all social classes and not a practice of only the economically disadvantaged. Tilem was faced with social expectations of elaborate ceremonies for the economically and socially prominent, but he, like others, rationally opted for a socially acceptable cost, time, and energy measures that in his case, it is rationally backed by the family and the artistic community.

4.1.3 Use of Digital Technologies in Crisis Contexts

The third finding explores the ways in which Balinese communities employed digital technologies, particularly the use of Zoom Meeting and WhatsApp applications, to sustain *yadnya* practices during the pandemic, which, due to gathering restrictions and health practices, prevented the traditional participation in rituals. The adaptations to these crises have continued beyond the immediate pandemic context, resulting in new and lasting opportunities for digitally mediated access and social involvement in religious rituals.

I Wayan Agus Adi Chandra family case highlights the use of digital technology during the pandemic. When family members pass away and the traditions of *ngaben* and ceremonial gatherings are not possible due to health protocols, the family set up a Zoom Meeting link so extended family could participate:

‘As a form of social support and participation from the family, we provided a Zoom Meeting link so that relatives and the community could still witness the *Ngaben* procession online. Through this digital media, family members and relatives in different locations could interact and offer their support virtually’ (Interview, I Wayan Agus Adi Chandra, 18 September 2025).

The family also organized multiple Zoom sessions for each ceremony, like ‘*Ngaben* Alm. I Gusti Ngurah Bagus Tejabhuwana’ and ‘*Kremasi* in Krematorium by the family of Alm. I Putu Nuratama.’ Meeting links were sent one day in advance so participants would have time to be ready. These links were also shared in family WhatsApp chat groups, specifically in the extended family group called ‘*Laskar Nang Latri*,’ so many relatives could participate, even those who were not able to be there in person.

The application Zoom, specifically its interactive elements, helped sustain the social aspect of the ritual. During the livestream, some relatives were able to connect with each other, while others were able to type their condolences or prayers, for example, ‘*turut berduka cita, amor ring acintya*’ (which means, condolences, may you unite with the divine), and these messages were displayed to all participants. Because of the great utility of the recording feature, families

were able to sustain their memorial documentation by sharing the unedited recording of the memorial ritual that occurred live, with those that were unable to live stream their memorial ritual. The recording of the memorial ritual, links to the recording, and documentation of the memorial ritual were also shared.

Aside from the adaptations made due to crises, the use of digital technology has also become a part of everyday formal practices, especially in the case of wedding invitations. Regarding the wedding invitation practice, Ni Putu Ayu Fitri Aristiani has this to say about her decision to use WhatsApp:

‘I use digital media because it is more efficient, saves on transportation costs, as well as the cost of printing invitations, so I can save 1-3 million rupiah. For me, technological advancements are very helpful; they make life easier and more practical, and the message can be conveyed properly. So, there is no reason to choose a more complicated method’ (Interview, Ni Putu Ayu Fitri Aristiani, 12 January 2026).

The economic benefits of not having to print invitations (saving transport and printing costs), which can be in the range of 1-3 million rupiah, can be a small yet significant wedding cost. More importantly, this practice signals a significant cultural change in the way ceremonies are organized, focusing more on practicality and efficiency. Informants have mentioned that printed invites that were left on their desks or at home never made it to the target invitees, while digital invites go to the personal devices of the invitees and can even allow for interactions and confirmations, in ways that printed invites simply cannot.

4.1.4 Collective Yadnya Implementation

The fourth finding shows that community groups and religious organizations organize collective *yadnya* as a means to create a repetitive process that both allows participants to ritualize their religion and strengthen their religious social support network and minimize the financial stress of individual participants (Figure 1).

Paguyuban Dharma Yadnya, represented by Jro Mangku I Wayan Dharma, provided insights on the implementation of their collective ceremonies:

‘We, from the Paguyuban Dharma Yadnya, organize *Pitra Yadnya* and *Manusa Yadnya* ceremonies at affordable costs. The tooth-filing ceremony (*Metatah/Mepandes*) is Rp300.000 per person, the *Ngaben* ceremony is Rp2.000.000 per deceased, and the *Memukur* ceremony is Rp3.000.000 per deceased. This collective *Pitra Yadnya* was followed by members consisting of 30 family groups (*dadia*) originating from Muncan Village, Karangasem, and there were also participants from outside the association’ (Interview, Jro Mangku I Wayan Dharma, 5 October 2025).



Figure 1. Collective *Pitra Yadnya* ceremony by Paguyuban Dharma Yadnya in Muncan Village, Karangasem (Photo: Researchers, 2025)

When looking at the economic side of collective and individual implementations, the difference is significant. Individual *metatah* ceremonies can cost millions of rupiah if conducted independently as this requires offerings, entertainment, and catering if needed. This is why the collective cost of Rp300.000 per person is a reduction of 90% or more. Individual *ngaben* ceremonies are on the other side of the spectrum, costing above Rp50.000.000. This is why the collective rate of Rp2.000.000 per *sawa* (corpse) makes it possible for families to perform *ngaben* ceremonies who would otherwise delay or go into debt to do so.

In the case of the *manusa yadnya* ceremony in Desa Adat Guwang, Gianyar, the participants take part in the mass *sapuleger* ceremony, which occurs every 6 months during the *wuku wayang* period of the Balinese calendar. One of the participants, Wayan Balik Anto, comments on this event:

‘The cost of attending a collective *sapuleger* ceremony is quite affordable, namely Rp. 300.000. All ceremony supplies are complete and in accordance with the *sastra*, the people who follow/attend the ceremony just participate in the *yadnya* as directed by the committee. In case of the collective *sapuleger* ceremony, cost required for the ceremony to be held at one’s home is at a minimum Rp10.000.000, not including the cost of food and other invitations’ (Interview, Wayan Balik Anto, 12 November 2025).

Therefore, *yadnya* ceremonies are held every 6 months during the *wuku wayang* period. The cost difference of Rp300.000 compared to Rp10.000.000 is a cost saving of 97%. Collective rituals that allow for community members to participate in rituals that can be overlooked or too financially burdensome for individual families, have been organized by Jro Mangku Dodi Ariyanta, leader of Pinandita Sanggraha Nusantara (PSN), along with the Atma Widya Community, for community members participating in.

Jro Mangku Dodi Ariyanta, leader of Pinandita Sanggraha Nusantara (PSN) in collaboration with the Atma Widya Community, has organized collective ceremonies for three specific rites: *warak karuron*, *ngelanglir*, and *ngelungah*. The first ritual, *warak karuron*, is performed for couples who have experienced a miscarriage. The second, *ngelanglir*, is for infants who have died. The third, *ngelungah*, is for children who die before their teeth emerge (approximately before the age of six months). These rituals are particularly significant because they address pregnancy loss and early childhood death—experiences that are often stigmatized or silently endured in many societies. He explained the rationale and structure of the program:

‘We implement a collective ceremony scheme so that the implementation costs are affordable for the community. For the *Warak Karuron* and *Ngelangkir* ceremonies, the fee charged is Rp650,000, while the *Ngelungah* ceremony is also Rp650,000. These costs are considered very reasonable compared to carrying out the ceremonies independently at home, which requires preparing ceremonial facilities, offerings (*banten*), a venue, and various other technical needs that can cost much more’ (Interview, Jro Mangku Dodi Ariyanta, 5 November 2025).

These ceremonies include rituals that are *warak karuron*, *ngelanglir*, and *ngelungah*. The first ritual, *warak karuron*, is performed for couples who have experienced a miscarriage. The second, *ngelanglir*, is for infants who have died. The third, *ngelungah*, is for children who die before their teeth emerge (approximately before the age of six months). These rituals are particularly significant because they address pregnancy loss and early childhood death, experiences that are often stigmatized / silently endured in many societies. Based on the interviews with informants and facility managers, the following is comparative cost breakdown:

Table 1. Comparative Cost of *Warak Karuron*, *Ngelanglir*, and *Ngelungah* Ceremonies

Ceremony Type	Individual/Family Cost (at home)	Collective Cost (via PSN/Atma Widya)	Savings
<i>Warak Karuron</i>	Rp3,000,000 - 5,000,000+	Rp650,000	80-87%
<i>Ngelanglir</i>	Rp3,000,000 - 5,000,000+	Rp650,000	80-87%
<i>Ngelungah</i>	Rp3,000,000 - 5,000,000+	Rp650,000	80-87%

If performed alone in the house, a family must prepare (1) *banten* (complete ceremonial offerings), costs around Rp1,500,000 - Rp3,000,000; (2) ritual tools and materials about Rp500,000 - 1,000,000; (3) food and hospitality for guests and family members who attended around Rp. 1,000,000 - Rp2,000,000+, (4) transportation and coordination fees approximately Rp500,000, (5) priest honorarium (*daksina*), approximately Rp300,000 - 500,000. The total amount can be above Rp5,000,000 depending on how many guests are invited and what type of offerings will be provided for the community during this ritual. In contrast, the community-based program managed by Pinandita Sanggraha Nusantara (PSN) and Atma Widya Community only costs Rp650,000 per family but already covers ceremonial facilities, offerings, priest service and ritual coordination. This is approximately 80-87% cheaper than building their own. Aside from the benefits in the economic side of view, Jro Mangku Dodi also emphasized the more valuable aspects of this program.

‘The program is a ritual activity and socio-religious movement to help Balinese do the *yadnya* without having economic burden on them. Thus, this program comes in the guise of spiritual service and social solidarity, in order for the communities to still uphold their *dharma* in peace and profound meaning’ (Interview Jro Mangku Dodi Ariyanta 5 November 2023).

This comment captures the fusion of social and theological elements that defines collective approaches to *yadnya*. The focus on sincerity, and precision as the essence of *yadnya*, quite apart from extravagance and big spending, anchors ritual practice theologically and economically. The characterisation of collective *yadnya* as both spiritual service and social solidarity constitutes it as a form of community mutual support instead of merely a cost-sharing initiative.



Figure 2. Collective *sapuleger* ceremony in Guwang Village, Sukawati, Gianyar (Photo: Researchers, 2025)

The frames of reference for this text are based on the practice of effecting action change through the behavioral mechanisms of collective practice in the context of yagna. According to Clear (2018), a person developing a habit is in part influenced by the person's cultural environment as a result of an overwhelming desire to belong. The most suitable climates for habit formation are those in which the person is surrounded by a culture of the behavioral ecosystem intended. In this case, the practice of collective yagna provides a culturally behavioral ecosystem of ritual practice that is both economically and socially supported. Far from going against the expectancy of the community, the participants have shifted into a new community, the Collective Community Ceremonial Organizer (CCCO), which allows and reinforces their new practices and behavioral ecosystem.

4.1.5 Comparative Cost Analysis for Middle-Income Households

This section presents a comparative cost analysis of three ceremonies (*Ngaben* / cremation, *Nganten* / wedding, and *Metatah* / tooth-filing) experienced by middle-income Balinese Hindu households in order to better understand the economic impact of alternative *yadnya* practices. Cost estimates are collected from interviews with practitioners, facility administrators, and community organizers and verified with participant-reported costs.

Table 2. Comparative Cost of *Yadnya* Ceremonies: Individual vs. Alternative Implementation for Middle-Income Households

Ceremony Type	Individual/Family Cost (Traditional Home-Based)	Alternative Collective Cost	Estimated Savings	Savings %	Cost Components (Individual)	Cost Components (Alternative)
<i>Ngaben</i> (Cremation)	Rp50-100 million+	Rp2-5 million	Rp48-95 million+	90-97%	<i>Banten</i> (offerings): Rp10-20 million; <i>Bade/wadah</i> (cremation tower): Rp15-30 million; <i>Megebagan</i> hospitality: Rp10-25 million; Priest honorarium: Rp1-5 million; Family coordination & logistics: Rp5-10 million	Collective <i>ngaben</i> : Rp2 million (Paguyuban Dharma <i>Yadnya</i>); Crematorium service: Rp15-20 million (all inclusive); No <i>megebagan</i> obligation
<i>Nganten</i> (Wedding)	Rp50-150 million+	Rp10-25 million	Rp40-125 million+	80-90%	Venue & decoration: Rp15-40 million; Catering (100-500 guests): Rp20-60 million; Entertainment: Rp5-15 million; Offerings & ritual equipment: Rp5-10 million; Family hospitality: Rp5-15 million	Gria/venue package: Rp10-25 million (includes offerings, priest, venue, basic decorations); Digital invitations: savings Rp1-3 million; No post-ceremony cleanup
<i>Metatah/Mepandes</i> (Tooth-filing)	Rp5-15 million+	Rp300-650 thousand	Rp4.7-14.35 million+	90-97%	Offerings (<i>banten</i>): Rp2-5 million; Priest honorarium: Rp1-3 million; Venue preparation: Rp1-3 million; Family hospitality: Rp1-4 million	Collective <i>metatah</i> : Rp300 thousand (Paguyuban Dharma <i>Yadnya</i>); Includes offerings, priest, and coordination

For *Ngaben* / cremation ceremonies, if carried out traditionally at home / in a village cemetery (*setra*), families bear many cost items that together add up to a large sum so that they can be said to have tremendous financial pressure. One significant expense is the *banten* (offerings), which in high season average between Rp10,000,000 and Rp20,000,000; these are nuanced *banten pejati*, *banten pengulapan*, *banten saiban* and other, complete with specialists who will need to be contracted to prepare difficult rituals like *calukans* / itemized animal sacrifices. Another expense is the bade or *wadah* (cremation tower/sarcophagus) amounting to around Rp15,000,000-Rp30,000,000 as these structures are large wooden elaborate works of art that symbolize a death person's social status and their prices vary greatly based on size wood used in the hand-craft craftsman fees. Mourning hospitality, called *magebagan*, contributes another Rp10,000,000 to Rp25,000,000, depending on the amount of people that come and stay home for two up to seven nights, feeding anywhere from 50 to up to 200 people per night. The *daksina* (honorarium) for the *sulinggih* (high priest)/ *pinandita* (ritual priest) is Rp1,000,000 – Rp5,000,000 for ceremonial fees and transportation. Family coordination and logistics (including transportation for family members, coordination with village customary institutions (*desa adat*), and rental of equipment such as tents, chairs, and sound systems) are Rp5,000,000 - Rp10,000,000. On the other hand a collective *ngaben* which is provided by Paguyuban Dharma Yadnya theme will cost just Rp2,000,000 for each corpse, complete with all offerings prepared in collective, shared priests services, logistics and scheduling have to be coordinated together and this solution allows to avoid individual *magebagan*. Another alternative is the services at a crematorium costing Rp3,000,000 to Rp5,000,000 and including the cremation process, basic offerings and priest services, but without the costly bade (cremation tower) and substantially cutting down / cutting out *magebagan* altogether. As a result, families can save Rp48,000,000 to Rp95,000,000 / more (90-97%) by opting for group or crematorium-based *ngaben*. The largest savings come from skipping / downsizing *magebagan* hospitality, which can be Rp 10-25 million over several days.

For *Nganten* / wedding ceremony, the financial challenge for Balinese families is much greater in the context of traditional home-based marriages. The prices of the venue and decorating alone are Rp15,000,000 to Rp40,000,000, including home repair / decoration, tent rental, seats, tables, stages, floral arrangements, and traditional decorations such as *penjor* and *umbul-umbul*. The biggest price is catering and hospitality, from Rp20,000,000 to Rp60,000,000.

Weddings usually attract 100 to 500 guests, frequently the whole village, so they have to provide traditional Balinese feasts (*megibung* / *ngejot*) and drinks and snacks. Entertainment costs Rp5,000,000 to Rp15,000,000 for traditional

music (gamelan), dance performances (tari), and sound system rental Offerings and ritual equipment Rp5,000,000 to Rp10,000,000 including *banten* for the wedding ceremony, ritual items and traditional apparel. Besides, the family hospitality, including additional meals for family members and assistance, as well as thank-you gifts for community volunteers (*ngayah*), ranging from Rp5,000,000 to Rp15,000,000. Venue-based alternatives provide cost savings.

The venue package / *gria* starts at Rp 10.000.000 and up to Rp25,000,000 includes the rental of the venue, minimal decor, amenities for the ceremony (*banten*, services of a priest), and no need to clean up after the wedding. For example, the three month ceremony of Yogi Pratama in Gria Gianyar cost Rp 10.000.000 compared to Rp50,000,000 / more at home. Moreover, digital invitations can save Rp1,000,000 to Rp3,000,000 by removing the need for printing and distributing invitations, and enabling more effective RSVP monitoring. Therefore, families can save Rp40,000,000 to Rp125,000,000 / more (80-90%) by choosing venue-based ceremonies. Most of the savings are in the lack of house preparation, decor, catering, and cleanup of the wedding, and less psychological load of social comparison and 'outdoing' neighbors.

For *Metatah/Mepandes* (Tooth-filing Ceremony), it is a heavy expense for middle-income households but less expensive than weddings / cremations. The offerings (*banten*) for the tooth-filing ritual itself are between Rp2,000,000 and Rp5,000,000, as they include special materials and preparation. The honorarium for the priest/ *sulinggih* who conducts the rite varies from Rp1,000,000 to Rp3,000,000; this includes the ceremonial instructions and blessings. The costs of venue preparation (home preparation for the ritual space, decoration and seating for family members) range from Rp1,000,000 to Rp3,000,000. The costs of family hospitality (food for family members and close relatives and refreshments during the ceremony) range from Rp1,000,000 to Rp4,000,000. The entire cost for each individual is between Rp5,000,000 to Rp15,000,000 / more. It costs a lot less if people do it together. Paguyuban Dharma Yadnya provides *metatah* in a group for Rp300,000 per person, which covers all offerings, shared priest services, organized logistics and ceremonial facilities.

The costs of the Pinandita Sanggraha Nusantara (PSN) program for very delicate ceremonies, such as *warak karuron* (miscarriage), *ngelanglir* (baby death), and *ngelungah* (child death before teething) are Rp650,000, including full offerings, priest services, and coordination. Families can save Rp4,700,000 to Rp14,350,000 or more (90-97%) by using communal implementation. For the middle-income group, the average monthly household income is around Rp5,000,000 to Rp15,000,000, and the cost for individual *metatah* could be equivalent to one to three months of household income. Hence, collective

ceremonies are a financially transformative option, allowing participation in the rituals without hurting household welfare.

4.1.6 *Alternative Yadnya as Adaptive Response*

Across venue alternatives, use of crematoria, digital adaptations, and collective implementations, there is growing recognition of the alternative *yadnya* practices as an adaptive response to ease the mental load and economic impact. The economic impact is significant. Case reports show savings of tens of millions of rupiah by families due to venue alternatives (savings of Rp40,000,000 on a three-month ceremony), use of crematoria (savings on *magebagan* and hospital storage fee costs), digital invitations (savings of Rp1-3 million on wedding invitations), and collective (compared to individual, 90-97% cost savings) ceremonies. The psychological advantages are equally vital. Comfort, peace, and anxiety-free ceremonial alternatives have been reported by all informants. The absence of social pressure, particularly the concern about being judged for lack of elaborate rituals, was a contributing factor for improved psychological state when performing rituals. The psychological and economic needs of families in particularly sensitive situations (such as miscarriage or the death of an infant) were specifically met by collective ceremonies.

Behavioral changes in individual practitioners of *yadnya* and subsequent social changes can be described using the atomic habits framework. Every new alternative practice begins from a micro decision from an individual or a family who is working with a set of constraints. These can be a small set of financially limited, time constrained, work obligations, or crisis situations. If the practice is successful in obtaining the desired goals (ritual validity, economic savings, psychological ease) for the individual with little effort and stress, this practice will be repeated. As new adopters of the practice help it to diffuse across social networks, community organizations that incorporate the practice into new, regulated activities (collective ceremonies) and structures (crematoriums, *gria* venues), transactional ease, and a similar practice to a larger audience begins to be a practice of social expectation. As time progresses, structures that are designed with the intention of accommodating new social expectations are also a facility for the practice, and these facilities will also be structures of social expectation. Temporarily, the shifts of cultural social expectations will act upon the framework of community social contact to determine what is adequate and fitting for the community social practice of *yadnya*.

4.2 *Discussion*

The primary finding shows a change in the ritualistic use of space by utilizing new sites like Taman Prakerti Bhuwana and *gria* (priests' compounds).

This practice explicitly defies the perception of ritual space as domestic and a space for the exhibition of social class. Participants, such as I Gusti Ngurah Andika and Yogi Pratama, state that selecting an offsite location is a way of intentionally choosing to simplify both the logistic and emotional challenges of having a ceremony at their residence.

This finding furthers the work of Wahyuni & Lumanauw (2024) on the wedding tradition literature by showing the empirical evidence for the relational and practical gains of this practice. This is a reframing of the classical Hindu doctrine, as supported by Hooykaas (2013) and Donder et al. (2025), which advocates for the removal of ostentation and the promotion of sincere (*bhakti*) intention along with the precise rituals, as a stark contrast to what Reztrianti et al. (2025) describe as ‘ritual consumption’. Using the lens of atomic habits, this is an example of a ‘make it easy’ choice (Clear, 2018). By contracting the more complicated aspects of decoration and hospitality, the family removes a lot of friction from the ritual process. The savings reported for Rp40,000,000 on a three-month ceremony are not just economic. They are savings that have moved from visible spending to necessities in the household and, as such, help relieve the ‘ritual-induced-poverty-traps’ that Aldashev (2024) speaks of.

The placement of crematoriums for *pitra yadnya* is pioneering in the realm of time, religion, and economics. It has been recorded, for example, by managers I Nyoman Karsana and Jro Mangku Alit, that the crematoriums solve the problem of delayed funerals due to ceremonial prohibitions and pandemics. They help avoid the logistical problem of deceased patients in hospitals and the huge economic burden of prolonged *magebagan*. This is a very innovative solution that goes beyond the fragmented approach to crisis adaptation during the pandemic (Huang & Rockwell, 2023).

The priest, Ida Bhagawan Agra Segening, has provided the theological justification for this ‘economically’ positive change. He cites some scriptures concerning the return of the *Panca Maha Bhuta* (five elements) to the earthly plane to ensure that the deceased does not become a *buta cuil* (restless spirit). This sort of theological backing, especially from the inner movement (Suara et al., 2018; Maulana et al., 2022), remains a strong facilitator of social transformation. The crematorium also, following the path of least resistance, obviates social burdens by avoiding the drawn-out negotiations with customary gatekeepers, the social obligation of multi-day hospitality, and the intricacies of community work. The example of I Gede Tilem’s family, despite their high social rank, illustrates clearly that, across the social spectrum, people are starting to accept the rationality of this choice.

A range of digital technologies, from Zoom to WhatsApp, are changing the way social obligation and ritual participation are conceptualized. The use of

Zoom by I Wayan Agus Adi Chandra's family to facilitate real-time participation of extended family members in the *ngaben* ritual when physical participation was restricted due to the pandemic is a classic example of how social rituals are sustained through technology. Campbell (2020) argues for a framework of 'digital religion' that allows us to see Zoom *ngaben* as a re-mediation of presence, rather than a degraded alternative. Participants type their condolences, watch the cremation procession on their screens and share recorded rites with family unable to attend.

The digital invitation delivered by Ni Putu Ayu Fitri Aristiani in the post-pandemic environment is evidence that social obligations are being rethought through innovation that is a permanent addition to social ritual, satisfying the basic human need to save time and money. Such a technique digitally facilitates the ritual impositions and alleviates the ritualized psychosocial loads as outlined by Megatsari et al. (2020) and Meidayanti Mustika et al. (2021).

The collective *yadnya* (mass *metatah*, *ngaben*, *sapuleger* and miscarriage/ infant death ceremonies) show how communities have been the engines of creativity in creating sustainability in religious practice. The Atma Widya Community and Paguyuban Dharma Yadnya are constructing a ritual paradigm in which members practice social cooperation and economic mutual aid. Religious leaders such as Jro Mangku Dodi have proposed a 'socio-religious movement' that needs 'sincere' and 'precise' ritual engagement, without any emphasis on unneeded luxury or monetary display (Oka Widana, 2025). But what are these collective actions that generate a new 'behavioral ecosystem'?

The processes work at three levels. The first is structural: by preparing communal rituals every six months during the *wuku wayang* period, the community is creating regular, repetitive chances for participation, easing the cognitive load of planning individual ceremonies. Second, social: others in the group are making the same choice, normalized by community leaders, reinforced through regular ritual calendars. Third, theological: Leaders argue that ritual is about sincerity and precision, not luxury, thereby giving religious cover for economically smart choices. Together, all of these factors create a climate in which the new habit of group engagement is simpler to develop than old, costly individual practices. This redefines the identity of a practitioner from a solitary individual carrying a burden to a member of a caring community. Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *habitus*, the deeply ingrained dispositions, habits, and schemes of perception that determine social practice, can further illuminate this process of collective ritual change. Atomic Habits discusses the changes in individual behaviors through reduced friction and environmental design, while *habitus* shows how these changes are integrated as enduring, taken-for-granted dispositions throughout the community.

In the context of Balinese families, frequent choices to use community *yadnya* / cremation services are not simply isolated individual decisions. Rather, these choices cumulatively reshape the communal habitus, changing what constitutes ‘normal’ ritual practice. Adaptation, then, is not a top-down command but a gentle reweaving of community religious practice through quotidian negotiations of structure and agency. The importance of including rituals for miscarriage and child loss is especially important as they provide a psychosocially and spiritually safe space for needs that are often disregarded. They offer means of psychosocial healing and social recognition in grieving when deep wounds are exposed.

It is not to be inferred from the above that other practices of *yadnya* are universally accepted and unchallenged. There are substantial counter-narratives and cultural pushback in Balinese Hindu society. This sub-section acknowledges the conflicts created by ritual change and offers expression to traditionalist views. Certain religious figures and community elders have expressed worries that the reduction of *yadnya* rituals, notwithstanding theological validation through *desa, kala, patra*, would lead to the loss of the precise ritual knowledge handed down through generations. One elder (who wished to remain anonymous) put it this way during fieldwork: *‘If we always take the easy way out, who will remember the full ceremonies? Our ancestors did not suffer to keep these ceremonies for us to leave them behind for convenience’* (Interview, Anonymous Community Elder, 20 June 2025). This attitude is that ritual complexity has cosmological meaning that cannot be reduced without loss.

The priests contacted for this study offered theological justification for alternatives, however they are a progressive faction and more conservative voices may not agree. Even with the economic and psychological advantages of alternative methods, some families report facing societal stigma for choosing crematoriums over traditional *ngaben* or digital invitations over printed ones. As one participant explained, *‘My neighbors didn’t say anything directly, but I could see from their faces that they thought we were being stingy. They still came to the ceremony, but the atmosphere was different’* (Interview, Anonymous Participant, 25 July 2025). This informal social sanctioning shows that community norms around ritual spending are shifting unevenly, with early adopters paying the price for challenging established expectations.

Not all age groups are equally resistant to alternative *yadnya* practices. Younger Balinese Hindus are more receptive to alternate venues, digital invitations and group ceremonies, particularly those who have migrated to urban centers for work. Alternatives, especially those who have put many resources in traditional rites throughout a lifetime, may be seen as a rejection of the principles they have espoused by older generations. *‘We saved for years to do*

my father's ngaben properly. Now young people want to do it for two million rupiah. It feels like they don't respect what we sacrificed' (Interview, Senior Community Leader, 28 July 2025).

This generational tension suggests that ritual change involves renegotiation of intergenerational memory and moral economy. Digital technology enabled ritual continuity during the pandemic, although some participants voiced difficulty with participating virtually. As one informant explained, *'Watching the ngaben on my phone was better than nothing, but I could not smell the incense, I could not feel the presence of the other mourners, I could not offer my prayers in the same way. It felt like watching a ceremony'* (Interview, I Wayan Suardana, 22 August 2025). This resonates with discussions in digital religion scholarship about what is lost when rituals are mediated through screens (Campbell, 2020). For certain Balinese Hindus, physical, co-present participation is essential. This study did not systematically sample traditionalist opinions; rather, the sampling was purposive, targeting practitioners of alternative *yadnya*. Future research should specifically explore the perspectives of community members who reject / resist these choices. The counter-narratives do not undermine the advantages of alternative methods described in this study, but they do challenge any narrative of seamless, widely supported transition. Change in ritual in Bali, as elsewhere, is negotiated, contested and unequal.

5. Conclusion

This research shows that the four alternative *yadnya* practices in Bali, including different locations, crematorium use, digital technology, and collaborative rituals, are a transient crisis response and a grassroots reorientation of ritual practice toward long-term theological and social sustainability, enabled by everyday behavioral shifts (analyzed through the lens of Atomic Habits theory) and grounded in religious legitimization (articulated through social theology and the Hindu principles of *desa, kala, patra*).

The economic consequences are high, where families lowered the costs of venue-based ceremonies up to Rp40,000,000, Rp1-3 million savings were gained from digital invites, and collective implementations resulted in 90-97% savings. Psychologically, participants experienced freedom from social comparison anxiety and ability to focus on spiritual aim (*bhakti*), rather than material show. Religious leaders have provided a theological justification for these innovations by emphasizing that ritual efficacy is an authentic intent and ritual accuracy. Future research must include: (1) quantitative surveys in representative Balinese communities to establish prevalence and welfare indicators; (2) interfaith comparative studies of similar ritual adaptations; (3) economic analysis at the household level of long-term welfare impacts; (4)

ethnographic study of cultural resistance and limits to normative change; (5) gender analysis of the distribution of ritual labor; and (6) environmental impact studies of changed patterns of material consumption associated with collective ceremonies. These questions would illuminate how religious groups may adjust to economic challenges without sacrificing spiritual integrity, with lessons for far beyond Bali.

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Use of Artificial Intelligence

The authors confirm that no generative artificial intelligence tools were used in the research process, including study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or manuscript drafting. All interviews, observations, transcriptions, coding, and thematic analyses were conducted manually by the research team. Standard spelling and grammar checking features were the extent of any AI-based tool usage. The authors assume full responsibility for the originality and integrity of this work.

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